

Pub Number

Small Wars



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Throughout this document, we use masculine nouns and pronouns for the sake of simplicity. Except where otherwise noted, these nouns and pronouns apply to either gender.

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FOREWORD

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Chapter 1

What’s a Small War?

The first, the supreme, the most far-reaching act of judgment that the statesmen and commander have to make is to establish ... the kind of war on which they are embarking.

Clausewitz

Introduction

On October 23, 1983, the world turned upside down for the U.S. Marine Corps. The deaths of 241 sailors, soldiers, and Marines in a concrete slab building in Beirut, Lebanon at the hands of a suicide bomber marked the beginning of the end of an era - an era where the enemy was a Soviet motorized rifle regiment and where Marines stood guard duty without magazines inserted because the United States was not “at war.” In retrospect, the Beirut bombing was a seminal event, heavily influencing subsequent Marine Corps organization and culture and ushering in the kind of profound change that seldom takes place in large organizations without the stimulus of a significant emotional event.

Orders were quick to follow: All Marines will walk post armed; Marines will not starch their utilities; Marines will not spit shine their combat boots; Marines will read professionally. These changes did not occur overnight, but looking back from today’s vantage point, it is hard not to marvel at the profound changes that have transformed the Corps.

If there can be a silver lining to a tragedy as great as Beirut, it is that it caused the Marine Corps to begin a great awakening to this new way of warfare. Leaders recognized that Marines must prepare differently, both physically and mentally, for the new challenges posed by terrorism, in whatever form.

Is conflict in the new millennium so different? The short answer is yes. While many of the fundamentals identified in the *Small Wars Manual* (SWM) of 1940 remain unchanged, there are significant threats and challenges that are without precedent. In the best tradition of not reinventing the wheel, we can use the *Small Wars Manual* as a foundation upon which to revitalize current thinking and doctrine. Thus, this volume does not supersede the original, but builds upon it. Our intent is to identify emerging threats and put them in a modern context to prepare us to convert the challenges they present into opportunities for improving our capabilities to provide for the national defense.

Small Wars Defined

The 1940 SWM defined the core of small wars as follows:

"...small wars are operations undertaken under executive authority, wherein military force is combined with diplomatic pressure in the internal or external affairs of another state whose government is unstable, inadequate, or unsatisfactory for the preservation of life and of such interests as are determined by the foreign policy of our Nation."

The SWM further noted that such operations are defined by their purpose, and not by their scope and scale. Purposes range from assistance in governmental operations on one hand to

full assumption of governmental responsibilities supported by an active combat force on the other.

However, to define the small war in today's world, we have to borrow from the 1940 definition, mix in some classic thought from Carl Von Clausewitz and take special notice of the political and diplomatic impact of local events in the age of instant information.

In its most elemental form, Clausewitz defined war as "an act of force to compel our enemy to do our will."¹ Clausewitz further explains that compelling an adversary to do one's will is thus the *object* of war, while the *means* used to accomplish this object is physical force.² In today's world of instant information and worldwide media coverage, his words: "the political object is the goal, war is the means of reaching it, and means can never be considered in isolation from their purpose."³ have an even greater relevance to the "small war."

Today our nation has a vast array of political and military capabilities that can influence or compel an adversary. These range from humanitarian assistance and disaster relief through combating terrorism, to fully developed lethal combat with or without a Declaration of War. In addition to core military skills, such operations involve a wide spectrum of specialized tactical skills and technical expertise, e.g., engineering and medical knowledge, as well as serious local cultural and political understanding. This gives us the first part of our definition:

¹ Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans., Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 75.

² *Ibid.*, 75.

³ *Ibid.*, 87.

Small wars are an extension of warfare by additional means, providing political leaders with a range of military options beyond just physical violence with which to further political objectives.

One need only review a sample of major operations of recent years to appreciate this increased range of operations. Response to numerous natural disasters; peace operations in Bosnia, Macedonia, and Kosovo; counter-drug operations in Latin America and along the U.S. - Mexican border; national assistance for humanitarian de-mining operations in Cambodia and Laos; and humanitarian assistance in areas as diverse as Somalia, Bangladesh, and Rwanda are representative. All these missions are bracketed by major combat operations against Iraq in 1990 and 2003. This range and frequency of military operations suggests that there is little chance that things will be different in the future.

Small wars are most often waged between adversaries that are asymmetrically empowered—one larger and more capable, one smaller and less capable when measured in traditional conventional military terms. This does not mean that small wars necessarily involve limited resources and small units. Small wars can be quite big when measured in terms of size of formations employed, numbers of personnel involved, numbers of casualties sustained, or amounts of resources expended. For example, you can argue that Vietnam was a small war in terms of its limited political purpose. However, it was not “small” relative to the size and capabilities of the forces involved.

Strategic/Diplomatic Context of Small Wars

It is the political/diplomatic *context* in which the war is fought that determines whether it is a “small war” and not the size and scope of resources expended, or the specific tactics

employed. Additionally, the political/diplomatic *context* determines the conflict's characteristics far more than the theoretical or actual capabilities of the participants.

Conventional wars can transition to small wars, and small wars can escalate into conventional wars when the strategic/diplomatic context changes. For example, the context of operations in Iraq during Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) in 2003 changed from full-scale combat—to defeat conventional forces and eliminate Saddam Hussein—to stability and support operations. Planning and execution for combat was in consonance with the Marine Corps Planning Process and expeditionary warfare doctrine. However, once stability and support operations began, many terms lost their relevance.

This distinction has practical implications. If such a hybrid war was anticipated and planned for, military planners might choose to consider the initial conventional combat phase as the shaping phase, rather than the decisive phase. In such a case, the stability phase might then be planned as the decisive phase. In short, if our political objectives can only be accomplished after a successful stability phase, then the stability phase is really the decisive phase. Recognizing the potential for this shift enables planners to better anticipate force requirements and to construct more agile strategic plans.

In small wars, survival interests of the greater power are not immediately at stake. However, it is possible that an unsuccessfully prosecuted small war could lead to a more serious situation where survival interests do become involved. Thus, small wars should not be viewed as somehow less important than big wars. Any activity that entails the use or credible threat of force must be handled with the utmost seriousness of purpose and resolve.

Whenever possible in an asymmetrical conflict, the “lesser” power will seek to frame the activities to neutralize the advantages of mass, scale, and superior economic output of the “greater” power. Specifically, adversaries will avoid fighting on terms that will attrite them into submission by overwhelming force, or by the short-lived effects of a rapid precision strike campaign. This approach can mean that small wars are potentially long wars, making pre-determined exit strategies and rigid timetables unrealistic and counterproductive.

In the small war, diplomatic and political imperatives establish the context. This mandates especially close coordination amongst all relevant governmental agencies—especially between the State Department and the Department of Defense.

Small wars may be protracted because of the political and diplomatic effort. This almost always will limit the level of violence and destruction. The objective is often a coming to terms or an agreement, rather than complete collapse or unconditional surrender.

The increased likelihood of protracted operations in small wars contrasts sharply with warfighting concepts that anticipate smaller, lighter, technologically empowered forces conducting rapid and decisive operations. Persistence may very well be more important than speed in small wars, where resolve and the tangible commitment of boots on the ground are more important commodities than raw firepower. This politically constrained application of force is the primary reason for the term “small” war.

Small wars typically do not involve a declaration of war.

Small wars are more common than state-on-state conventional wars. While the United States was involved in four big wars in

the last century, it participated in well over 60 small wars and lesser contingencies.⁴

While every small war is unique, in important respects significant to the military planner, there are common attributes that justify categorization under the collective term: small wars. These common attributes dictate that small wars must be prepared for, planned for, and conducted differently than large-scale conventional wars.

Small Wars Maneuver Warfare

The Marine Corps’ maneuver warfare philosophy is perfectly suited for winning small wars because it accepts the inevitability of chaos, complexity, and friction and the preeminence of the human element. Recognizing that even the simplest things in war are difficult, maneuver warfare places a premium on flexibility and adaptability—essential attributes of a successful small wars force. As an institution organized for maneuver warfare, where mission orders and decentralized execution based upon commander’s intent are the norm, the Marine Corps constitutes a highly effective force for the prosecution of future small wars.

⁴ John Collins, *America's Small Wars* (New York: Brassey's, 1991), 13.

Chapter 2

What's New About Small Wars?

We are at a moment in world affairs when the essential ideas that govern statecraft must change. For five centuries it has taken the resources of a state to destroy another state: only states could muster the huge revenues, conscript the vast armies, and equip the divisions required to threaten the survival of other states. Indeed posing such threats, and meeting them, created the modern state. In such a world, every state knew that its enemy would be drawn from a small class of potential adversaries. This is no longer true, owing to advances in international telecommunications, rapid computation, and weapons of mass destruction. The change in statecraft that will accompany these developments will be as profound as any that the State has thus far undergone.⁵

Strategic Environment

Changes to the world's geostrategic landscape have clearly established the United States as a preeminent power with global interests and responsibilities. The old ideological threat of communism present through the Cold War has been replaced by widely differing ideological and religious extremist, criminal, and opportunistic threats. The current

⁵ Philip Bobbitt, *The Shield of Achilles* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 2002), xxi.

strategic environment, judged by these historical standards, will be a period when the probability of large-scale conventional warfare is diminished in relation to small wars. This international environment suggests that smaller states and even non-state actors, empowered by weapons and information technology, will rise in relative strategic importance.

In addition to changing the political environment, technology is also changing the character and conduct of warfare. The ever-widening influence of economic and technologic power gives certain powerful offensive capabilities to minor states, sub-national groups, and even individuals that formerly resided only with the nation-state. For example, weapons of mass destruction and mass effects have radically increased the potential damage sub-state actors can inflict. And, information technology has greatly increased their reach to a global scale.

In the past, nation-states were discrete entities with largely intelligible goals and interests. By contrast, today's newly empowered quasi-nation-states and non-state actors significantly increase the number of variables the military planner must assess in order to know the character and composition of the threat. Because non-state actors tend to be more dynamic and changeable than state actors, the complexity of analysis increases exponentially with the addition of non-state entities.

Even as the conduct of war is changing with the introduction of long-range precision strike and ever improving command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance (C4ISR), warfighting is also changing in significant ways beyond these obvious and highly touted technical improvements. Our small war adversaries are not likely to provide traditional combat formations (brigades, divisions, etc.) for us to target because they know too well that

they cannot survive in the environment our technical capabilities have created. Ironically, the interplay of our superior military capabilities with the recognition of this fact by our adversaries will ensure the character of future wars will be such that our “asymmetric” technological advantages will be substantially diminished.

In his war manifesto, bin Laden declared, “that due to the imbalance of power between our armed forces and the enemy forces, a suitable means of fighting must be adopted, i.e., using fast moving light forces that work under complete secrecy. In other words to initiate a guerrilla warfare, where the sons of the nation, and not the military forces, take part in it.”⁶

Just as our preeminent large-scale conventional and nuclear capabilities of the 20th century pushed warfare to guerrilla and insurgency warfare, so the information, sensing, and strike capabilities of the 21st century will push the inevitable conflict of this century toward small wars. In these small wars, we may be forced to fight on terms far removed from our traditional way of war where massive firepower and mass production trumped all other capabilities.

In the past, the United States’ true and undeniable asymmetric advantage was its economy. In simplest terms, we could always produce more and thereby destroy more than any adversary. In the new more disquieting world, **we will no longer be able to rely so definitively on mass, our formerly unassailable strength.** While students of military history have always known that a better led force could win operational and tactical victories against a larger, better

⁶ “Declaration of War Against the Americans Occupying the Land of the Two Holy Places,” in Alexander and Swetnam, *Usama bin Laden's al-Qaida* (New York: Transnational Publishers, 2001), Appendix 1 A, p. 11.

equipped foe, it was also recognized that when vital interests were at stake, strategic victory would normally accrue to that nation-state with the greatest number of battalions. Now however, new technologies and increasing economic interdependencies may be placing this principle of mass in jeopardy.

While our tremendous technological advances are important, their most significant impact will be more in how they establish the context and character of future conflicts rather than how they directly contribute to the actual prosecution of combat operations. This phenomenon is analogous to the impact of nuclear weapons during the Cold War where nuclear weapons were not employed, but their presence had a decisive impact on the character of conflict. Thus, the relatively simplistic application of firepower may have to be replaced by the more subtle orchestration of all elements of national power (military, political, economic, diplomatic, social, informational, and legal).

Iraqi reactions to our combat operations during Operation Iraqi Freedom exemplify this point. The Iraqi military understood they could not compete in the conventional military environment that our technology created so, not surprisingly, they chose not to do so. Thus, our conventional offensive phase merely set the conditions (shaped the environment) for decisive operations to be conducted during the inherently protracted stability and support phase. While our military’s technological advancements used to rapidly prosecute the offensive phase were new, the Iraqi reaction to them was age-old. From the earliest recorded history of human conflict, the lesser military power has seldom simply capitulated in the face of overwhelming military strength, but has reverted to asymmetric strategies, such as insurgent warfare, to continue the conflict on terms that make their success, if not inevitable, at least possible.

Technology is also having a tremendous impact on our ability to gather, process, and disseminate intelligence. However, as with weapons and C4ISR technologies, the accompanying procedural and intellectual innovations will be at least as important as improved hardware and software. For example, the military planner has traditionally viewed the world through the lens of the nation-state, providing a clean and logical way to divide the world. As a result, intelligence organizations produce country studies and country books that describe the threat, while analysts tend to focus on specific countries. This is perfectly logical, since as the briefest glance at the globe reveals, all the world's real estate, with the exception of Antarctica, is claimed by a state. Certainly, the growth of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and other regional alliance structures have caused some shift in thinking and a recognition that regions are worth examining without regard to political boundaries.

Even under this broader construct, we are still looking to the state as the primary building block with little emphasis on sub-national organizations and groupings—such as tribes. Small wars require us to decompose the problem into smaller pieces, below the state level, in order to get the fidelity necessary to successfully understand and cope with new non-state threats. Thus, while maintaining a focus on nation-state characteristics, **we will have to focus with greater resolution on such factors as cultural, ethnic, religious, societal, and economic microclimates that comprise the nation, region, or organization.**

Nature of the Threat

Our most challenging and likely most prevalent adversaries of the future will be matrix threats. As explained below, matrix organizations can combine into a threat matrix creating a truly

multi-dimensional security challenge. This is a very simple way to describe a very complex threat. Our adversaries are challenging us to a game of three-dimensional chess, and while we may have a soft spot for checkers, we will be obliged to follow their suit.

Matrix Organizations

In response to the complex business environment, many companies have established what is described in business jargon as matrix organizations. In this case, a matrix is an organizational structure in which two or more lines of command, responsibility, or communication may run through the same individual. Most often this means that a functionally organized company establishes project teams composed of individuals from throughout the organization and possibly even drawn from sources external to the company, to accomplish a specific task or project. In addition to providing “just-in-time” support without unnecessary idle time for specialists, this corporate approach allows companies to share unique expertise to multiple projects concurrently.

In a military example, when the G-3 establishes an operational planning team (OPT) for a specific planning task by calling on specialists from the other functional G sections, they create a temporary matrix organization. This efficiently applies the best expertise for the task when they are needed and for the period of time they are needed. The fluid and agile characteristics of this organizational design that make it so appealing to those using it are the same characteristics that make the analysis and assessment of opposing matrix organizations so difficult. This dynamic demands changes to our intelligence processes. Matrix organizations do not exist in isolation. They combine, cooperate, and compete with other matrix organizations. This internal flux (ever changing tables

of organization), and external flux (changing allies and adversaries) can be daunting to grasp unless these relationships are described in terms of a threat matrix.

Analysis of a Threat Matrix

Matrix organizations, as just described, provide a useful analogy in the current strategic environment. A significant difference between the corporate matrix and the threat matrix is the probability that interfacing matrix groups may not know the identity or location of one another.

From a small wars perspective, the world is made up of nation-states and a collection of matrix organizations where state and/or non-state actors join together for a given task or desired outcome and then dissolve when complete. Analysts focused solely on countries could thus overlook very significant organizational structures. Analysis must be sufficiently flexible to recognize that the threat matrix will look different for every objective and at any given place in time. It is not a static network, but a constantly varying mix of interconnected participants and functions. This is very different from the traditional order of battle analyses used during the Cold War.

Newly empowered non-state actors are tough to counter because their organization (structure, membership, alliances) and objectives are constantly changing and are much less formal than typical state-oriented groups. This means that relationships among individuals or groups connected for one objective could be completely unconnected for another. As a result, the specific circumstances—the context—are the critical determining factor.

How a Threat Matrix Works

In its simplest form, a terrorist threat matrix could be composed of four or five separate groups, with very loosely linked goals and allegiances. In this arrangement, one group could provide explosive training, another would supply the explosives, yet another would provide intelligence on actual targets, and so forth.

This works for the lesser power in the asymmetrical array because it is possible for threat groups to identify—for any given time—objectives held in common. When these interests intersect, they create grounds for possible cooperation, either tacit or overt amongst these organizations. And, the “just-in-time” nature of the resulting matrix complicates useable analysis of an adversary’s intentions. If our adversary is highly flexible, we will have to be able to detect and respond to his changes even faster in order to control the tempo of the competition or conflict.

Al Qaeda is a good example of a highly flexible matrix organization. It is transnational, with elements spread globally. While Osama bin Laden heads the hierarchy, the operational organization can be relatively flat, giving Al Qaeda the ability to function in a decentralized manner, using mission orders and commander’s intent. Organizationally, Al Qaeda did not achieve its extensive global reach and lethality until joining with Zawahiri’s Egyptian Islamic Jihad (EIJ) in 1998. Al Qaeda as we know it today is thus inherently a matrix organization.

While many Al Qaeda members are strongly ideologically motivated, many others who participate in Al Qaeda activities, or who simply support and sustain the organization, have non-ideological reasons, most often economic, for cooperating.

Dealing with a Threat Matrix

Key to this is recognizing that a threat matrix organization is more than simply an amalgam of multi-national groups or individuals. More importantly, it is a task-organized group of specialists tied together for a specific task during a specific period. As in the corporate model, threat specialists can be called in to provide specific assistance, making their expertise and their motivation the key defining variable, rather than their nationality or ideology. While many, if not most, participants share a common religious or ideological motivation, this is not a prerequisite to membership in the greater matrix structure.

These organizational combinations are significant to those charged with countering a matrix threat such as posed by Al Qaeda, for there are no traditional boundaries—not national, not religious/ideological, not economic. This variant of the matrix is focused on a finite opportunity requiring the intelligence analyst to be able to make much finer distinctions among threats than simply pigeon-holing them into national, religious, or ideological bins.

Small wars research, analysis, and planning will have to be like cancer research, very specific and focused on a particular strain while continuing to be informed on the larger fundamentals shared by all. General research and study will still be important, but it will not be sufficient to find the cure for the matrix threats that most endanger international health.

Given the dynamic, adaptive nature of the threat described above, it is likely that an effective countering strategy will require an equally dynamic and multi-disciplinary organizational structure. Interagency cooperation must become a reality. Perhaps the best way to facilitate this is to begin developing our own matrix arrangements amongst the

various agencies. In this construct, the military planner would just as likely be a member of a “project team” or interagency task force as he or she would be a member of a traditional, functionally oriented, military-only staff.

At the operational level, the Civil Military Operations Center (CMOC) is an example of how this sort of interagency organization could work. During Unified Task Force (UNITAF) operations in Somalia, the CMOC was considered the “humanitarian operations center.” It was co-managed by the Agency for International Development’s Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) and the U.S. military. It was located at the UN headquarters to get it “outside the wire” of the military compound—to encourage more non-governmental organization (NGO) participation. These co-management and site arrangements helped establish credibility in the eyes of the various relief organizations.⁷ As the recognized place to come for humanitarian operations information, the CMOC became vital for scheduling and coordination of transportation, equipment needs, engineer support, and security requirements. This helped establish a cooperative relationship that is not always easily developed with NGOs.⁸ Similar arrangements thoughtfully organized with the cultures of the various participating agencies in mind can yield similarly successful cooperation at strategic, operational, or tactical levels. It provides a flexible framework for creating our own matrix organizations to counter our matrix adversaries.

⁷ Ambassador Robert Oakley, “Briefing to MOUT 2000 Conference,” Santa Monica, CA, 22-23 March 2000.

⁸ Ibid.

Rise of Matrix Threats

Failed states are particularly conducive to the rise of matrix threats. Economic and political collapse leads to the inability of the state to maintain control by inviting internal and external challenges to its authority. Failed economic circumstances also create a climate conducive to petty criminal activity that often evolves into more serious and pervasive organized crime and contributes to a further decline in social capital. The dissolution of the Soviet Union has provided numerous examples of this scenario. Since crime and corruption are major contributing factors to the collapse, any small war military intervention should expect to have a heavy policing component.

Threatened and aspiring elites of the 21st century are forming matrix organizations to maintain and expand their control, thereby filling the role played by older ideological threats of the 20th century such as communism and fascism. These elites may be ruling members of failed or failing states. They may also be cultural, religious, tribal, business, or local elites who feel their position in their respective hierarchy is threatened by modernization, economic dislocation, or the cumulative effects of globalization.

While threatened elites may resort to terrorism as a means, it is essential to understand that terrorism is not the threat. The true threat is the organization itself and the factors leading to its formation—not the tactics that it employs. During World War II, we did not focus on defeating blitzkrieg; rather, we focused on defeating Germany. Just as we would have been less successful during World War II if we had focused solely on countering blitzkrieg, so today would we be handicapped if we limit ourselves to focusing on the effects of the matrix threat and not the threat itself. The first step in any small war

must be to see clearly the nature of the threat - from this analysis, all else flows.

Technology

Clearly, new technologies have re-characterized the threat such that non-state actors are empowered in ways previously unimagined. **This technological empowerment falls into two principal realms: informational effects and weapons effects.**

Ideas are the seeds of small wars, and information technology has given anyone with access to a computer the ability to spread a message globally at little or no cost. In the past, it was only the state and the major media who could obtain such coverage. Information technology thus extends the potential support base of the adversary globally. This extended support base can influence global opinion and can facilitate the provision of financial, material, or personnel support to the cause. For example, Al Qaeda's globally dispersed operations, facilitated as they are by the Internet, make them the first truly network-centric adversary we have faced.

Informational Effects

In our increasingly legalistic society, the subjective nature of small wars can be manipulated to our adversary's advantage. For example, those hostile to U.S. policies will claim in the court of public opinion that U.S. actions violate international law, by claiming that preemptive actions do not meet Just War criteria. Such tactics have given rise to what has been called lawfare—the use of law as a weapon of war. Information technology is a key enabler for creating an effective lawfare campaign. A recent example was the attempted use of human shields to prevent U.S. attack of critical targets in Iraq. While ultimately an abortive attempt to use the law of war and world opinion against the U.S., it clearly demonstrates the potential

of the combined use of information technology and international law.

Weapons Effects

Technology's current role in increasing weapons lethality is widely understood and is historically consistent with the trend of improving effects and precision. However, spread of today's highly lethal conventional weapons and weapons of mass destruction (WMD) into the hands of sub-state actors, has created a momentous shift in our national security strategy—to include a new emphasis on preemption. Developments in biological, chemical, and computer sciences have also expanded the range of potential weapons. Enhanced weapons lethality and proliferation of WMD increase the likelihood of small wars by destabilizing the strategic environment and greatly increasing the influence of sub-state actors. These new technologies increase the risks to the homeland from direct attack and increase the chances for small wars to escalate into regional or global conflict. Chesty Puller never had to worry that his activities in Nicaragua could precipitate a WMD attack on Washington.

Urban vs. Rural

Current demographic trends point to small wars being urban rather than rural—the opposite of those of the early 20th century. The ratio of urban to rural inhabitants is steadily increasing as indicated by the National Intelligence Council's *Global Trends 2015* report:

By 2015 more than half of the world's population will be urban. The number of people living in mega-cities – those containing more than 10 million inhabitants – will double to more than 400 million ... Ninety-five percent of the increase [in world population] will be in developing countries, nearly all in rapidly expanding urban areas. Where political systems are brittle, the combination of population growth and urbanization will foster instability.⁹

Increasingly, the U.S. military will have to conduct operations in complex urban terrain, an environment for which it is not optimized. Would-be insurgents and terrorists are going where the people and money are, and money especially is a key component in today's environment. Urbanization has become an enabler for insurgents and terrorists to achieve their political aim of eroding the government's will. This presents a new small wars environment with populations so dense that conventional military assets cannot be effectively employed.

The classic guerrilla warfare setting is no longer the mountainous hideout, the dense forest, and the wild jungle. Today, dense urban terrain provides a safe-haven to the urban guerrilla or terrorist. And, in this environment, readily available information technology greatly facilitates dispersed insurgent and terrorist urban. Multiple means of communication allow planning and execution of operations without the need to mass. Individuals need never meet to perform their assigned tasks and may in fact never know the identities of those with whom they work.

⁹ National Intelligence Council, *Global Trends 2015: A Dialogue About the Future with Nongovernmental Experts* (Washington, DC, December 2000), 6, 15.

Historically, insurgents have had to join in at least fire team or squad size operations to create major effects, but this is no longer necessary for two principal reasons. First, individuals empowered by technology can now create their own mass effects. Second, society's critical infrastructure is far more brittle and susceptible to systemic shock than in the past when populations, power generation, and food distribution were far less centralized. These changes allow many new ways for groups or individuals to create serious physical or economic harm with no need to conduct any form of traditional massed operations. While the rural guerrilla remains a potent force, as evidenced by ongoing insurgencies in Afghanistan, the Philippines, and Columbia; increasingly, the complex terrain of world's urban centers will be the insurgent's and terrorist's jungle of the 21st century.

External Factors

Experiences in the Balkans demonstrate the significant and growing impact of external forces on the conduct of small wars. In the Balkan's case, there were five primary categories of external participants: UN sponsored forces, NGOs, displaced national or ethnic groups, Muslim "freedom fighters," and the media. The most visible and numerous external participants were the UN representatives who participated in peace enforcement and peacekeeping operations. NGOs also provided a significant presence while providing humanitarian assistance. Displaced ethnic and national groups were a significant source of volunteers and economic support. The fourth group, international Muslim mujaheddin, had a minor but important symbolic role in the Balkans. Certainly understanding their ties to terrorist groups with international reach and their potential for more substantial participation in future conflicts makes this group worthy of our attention. Finally, there was the media, who are

somehow always present in every area of conflict. Because they provided essential news to all who watched or read their products, their extensive coverage of the humanitarian crisis in the Balkans had a significant impact on U.S. policy.

Joint and Coalition Response

The new categories of external participants are not the only significant change from historical small wars. It is almost certain that the U.S. will respond to small wars with either a joint or coalition military force—or both. This dictates that these forces must have a common understanding of the desired end state and general agreement on how it will be pursued. Beyond this, they also must have a clear understanding of all external participants in order to ensure that unity of effort is maintained and the full nature of the conflict is understood. Joint and coalition planners must take external participants as seriously as the local population and indigenous forces. Intelligence activities should explicitly examine each of these categories in order to develop a more comprehensive and accurate assessment of the threat.

Chapter 3

Strategic Perspectives

The non-military problems which you will face will also be most demanding - diplomatic, political and economic. You will need to know and understand not only the foreign policy of the United States, but the foreign policy of all countries scattered around the world. You will need to understand the importance of military power and also the limits of military power. You will have an obligation to deter war as well as to fight it.

John F. Kennedy, West Point speech 1962

Non-Military Aspects of Small Wars

Given the importance of the non-military aspects of small wars, how can political and military leadership develop a successful strategy? How best are all the elements of national power employed and properly balanced, thus optimizing the Defense Department's contribution?

In almost all cases, we can clarify strategic and operational challenges and gain useful insights into small wars by applying a logical framework from which to discern appropriate strategic, operational, and tactical objectives and

missions. One proven approach is to array *geographic*, *demographic*, and *economic* elements whose characteristics and trends are affected only marginally by discrete events or activities. Key to successful use of such a systematic classification is a clear understanding of the fundamentals and—to a certain extent—an appreciation of the long-view of history.

Here is a series of questions that can be useful in thinking through and identifying the strategic issues relevant to the small wars planning effort. They are not meant to be prescriptive checklists. Many of the questions are state-centered because this helps understand the sea in which non-state organizations swim. This macro-context provides essential insight into the nature and motivation of matrix threats and the sources from which they draw their strength. In many important ways, these fundamental classifications are the foundation upon which detailed intelligence and analysis can be built. They give us a start point for answering that most crucial question, what is the nature of the conflict?

Geography

Even in this age of ever advancing technology, the geographic attributes of a country or region are still a substantial determining factor in the makeup of the inhabitant's culture and institutions. Terrain and weather have traditionally played a significant role in operational planning. In strategic planning, we examine geography not only for its impact on our military operations, but also for how it is a formative factor in shaping the nature of a conflict—how it impacts the inhabitants and their institutions.

Clearly, there is a strong correlation between the natural endowments of a country and its material and societal health. Climate, terrain, natural resources, relative position to other

nations, and accessibility to the sea are strong determinants of a people's economic success and societal cohesion.

Geographic Planning Questions:

- How are the adversary's resource dependencies fulfilled?
 - How are they distributed?
 - Especially water, sustenance, energy.
- How are these dependencies trending?
 - More or less available, self-sufficient?
- Is it a maritime or continental nation?
- Are bordering nations stable or unstable, aggressive or benign, supporting or supportive?
- Does the internal terrain balkanize the population, impede or promote mobility and commingling?
- Does the nation or group possess significant exploitable natural resources?

Demographics

Demography, broadly defined, plays an essential role in understanding the nature of the conflict. Population density, age, and gender distributions have a tremendous impact on a nation's productivity and tendency for aggression. Abnormal demographic trends create fertile ground for the leader who is able to scapegoat his society's woes onto another national, religious, or ethnic group.

Demographic Questions:

- What is the population density and distribution?
 - How is it trending?
- What are the age and gender distributions?
- What are the ethnic/religious/ideological compositions?
- How homogeneous is the populace?
- Is the nuclear family intact?

- What are the level, distribution, and quality of education?
- Who are the haves? Who are the have-nots?
- Who wields political and social power and how is it wielded; e.g., hierarchical, matriarchal, patriarchal, religious, tribal, clans, parliamentary, authoritarian?

Economics

In its most basic sense, a nation-state's economy is driven by its geographic and demographic characteristics. Natural resource endowments and intellectual and social capital are the fundamental components of a viable economy. Money and more broadly, economics, are tremendously important shaping forces in human affairs, especially human conflict. Despite their variations and volatility, large-scale, macro-economic trends can be forecast and can be of significant use to the planner.

It is possible to forecast macro-economic trends and thus identify potential sources of future conflict. As a rule, where economies are declining or in transition the chances for civil unrest and violence are proportionately increased. Of note, even when the planner is focused on sub-national groups, the economics of host nations and the increasingly global economy retain a predictive utility.

Economic Questions:

- What is the economic growth rate?
 - Is the economy in question sufficiently transparent to accurately assess this question?
- To what extent do societal and cultural institutions support economic activity (social capital)?
- How is wealth distributed?
- What is the nation's (host nation's) GDP?
 - Is it increasing or decreasing?

- How much of the wealth of the nation is dependent on international trade?
- How efficiently are natural and human resources exploited for economic development?
- What are the societal mores regarding economic growth and wealth distribution?
- Who holds the economic power?
 - How are these individuals interconnected?

Again, the foregoing geographic, demographic, and economic questions are not meant to be definitive or prescriptive, but rather, are meant to assist in developing a mindset with which to better facilitate small wars planning.

Culture

The French were considering banning pornography from television. A French pornographer who also writes children's novels attacked the proposed ban: "Porn is one of the fruits of the youth uprising of May 1968," he wrote, "and it is a precious cultural asset."

Iran's Education Ministry decreed that students and teachers in girls' schools may remove their veils in the classroom; Jomhuri-e-Islami, a conservative newspaper, denounced the ruling: "The aim of this plan is to encourage nudity."¹⁰

The differences and variations amongst the world's cultures make small wars inherently complex. Small wars often involve a contest for the popular support of a nation's form of government. As numerous conflicts have demonstrated, it is impossible to win the cooperation, let alone the hearts and

¹⁰ Roger Hodge, "Weekly Review August 6, 2002," from *Harper's Magazine Weekly Review*, www.harpers.org/weekly-review/weekly-review.php3?date=2002-08-06; accessed 12 June 2003.

minds, of the people without a thorough appreciation of their culture. Culture comprises a significant element of the second "O" in the O-O-D-A Loop (observation, orientation, decision and action).

*The second O, orientation - as the repository of our genetic heritage, cultural tradition, and previous experiences - is the most important part of the O-O-D-A loop since it shapes the way we observe, the way we decide, the way we act.*¹¹

This statement by Boyd clearly ties culture to the operational art and provides a strong endorsement for pursuing cultural knowledge. This is not to say that countries or regions have a single culture. One needs only to look at Iraq to see this. It was recognition of the importance of cultural intelligence that the Marine Corps Intelligence Activity (MCIA) was established. MCIA produces cultural intelligence products in direct support of the operating forces.

As a prelude to the topic of culture, it is useful to once again reflect on the *Small Wars Manual* of 1940. It discusses, at some length, the operational requirement to understand and employ psychological concepts. The *Manual* emphasizes the essential role the human element plays in small wars, in sharp contrast with much contemporary military writing that focuses on the technical aspects of conflict. The observations of the *Small Wars Manual* remain valid, and are effectively validated and corroborated by more recent studies in behavioral science.¹²

¹¹ John Boyd, "A Discourse on Winning and Losing," unpublished paper, 26.

¹² e.g., "Biology as Precedent," Lionel Tiger; "Evolutionary Psychology and Violence: A Primer for Policymakers and Public Policy Advocates," Christopher Boehm; "A Theory of the Origin of Natural Law," Mark McGrady and Michael McGuire; "Coalitions and Alliance in Human and Other Animals," Alexander Harcourt and Frans De Waal.

The most consistent message from these more recent studies is that man is a competitor—a warrior. In over 3,000 years of recorded history, only 268 years have been without major wars.¹³ Biological theories on the causes of human violence deserve more attention than they have received by the military planner. While no theory alone is sufficient, biological theories are the most fundamental, and therefore provide a valuable and irreplaceable foundation for other theories based upon psychological, religious, or social considerations.

Culture is human nature's most significant creation. One effective way to classify human culture that has stood the test of time is to use six categories: science, language, history, religion, art, and myth.¹⁴ These six categories are a useful way for the military planner to consider and evaluate the contending cultures in a small war.

Science

Given our Western bent for technology, science is perhaps the easiest aspect of culture for the U.S. military to comprehend. Science and technology speak a universal language. But how different cultures approach and incorporate science and technology is not so simple. In certain western cultures, one can argue with some justification that science has displaced religion as the object of our ultimate admiration or worship. For other cultures, especially Middle Eastern cultures, science has a more circumscribed role, perhaps in part because they see how science has supplanted religion in other parts of the world. How a culture approaches science and by extension, modernity, is an essential insight into its nature.

¹³ Arnold Ludwig, *King Of the Mountain* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2002), 357.

¹⁴ Ernst Cassirer, *Essay on Man* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1944), 68.

Language

The construct and use of language provides key insights into a culture. Historians place considerable emphasis on language as a tool for decoding culture. Word origins and usage provide a window into foreign cultures. Language training's utility, therefore, is more than simply providing the necessary mechanism to understand what an individual might be saying in the literal sense, but it is also a necessary tool for developing an understanding of what he feels and why he feels the way he does.

History

Humans are storytellers, and contemporary culture is an extension of our narrative history. History provides a culture its foundation and, as such, is an important ingredient in any contemporary conflict. Put simply, one cannot understand a culture without knowing its history, and one cannot understand a conflict without understanding its culture.

Religion

The role and influence of religion varies from being the dominating influence to being simply a passing consideration. In many areas of the world, religion is rising to become a dominating supranational organizing principle. Religion can be a rally point for the have-nots of the world. The September 11, 2001 attacks on New York and the Pentagon emphasize the role of religion in cultural conflict.

Art

While there may be an inclination for the military planner to give art short shrift, the study of a culture's art provides important insights into what is important to that culture. Whereas language is a spoken and written key to the understanding cultural intricacies, art is a visual, textual, and

symbolic window into its essence. For example, during relief operations in Somalia, Unified Task Force (UNITAF) forces produced a daily paper, *RAJO*, in which they sponsored a poetry contest because they knew that poetry was an important art form in Somali culture. In discussing this, Special Envoy Robert Oakley said, “We are using *RAJO* to get the correct information into the hands of the Somali populations and to correct distortions....”¹⁵ Oakley explained how important the poetry contest was in opening a dialogue between the two sides, thus offering a tangible example of how an appreciation of art can influence operations and outcomes.

Myth

To some degree, all cultures have important defining myths. Like history, myth is closely related to the narrative nature of man since myth is really a story, objectively true or not, that is believed and passed down by a society. Myth can often be viewed as a shorthand representation for deeply held cultural beliefs. Understanding a culture’s myths provides a key for unlocking its deepest mysteries, and by extension, the character of the competition and conflict in which it engages. Rather than thinking of myth as confined to the ancient past, planners will do well to understand that information technology has created a new environment where myths can be generated and perpetuated with amazing ease. Large segments of the globe’s population, who have access to computers and the Internet can—sheltered from the harsh reality of physical competition and conflict—can create electronic cyber myths based upon *impressions* extracted from the electronic media. The instantaneous and somewhat

¹⁵ Joint PSYOP Task Force, Unified Task Force Somalia, “Psychological Operations in Support of Operation Restore Hope,” (Ft. Bragg: 4th Psychological Operations Group, 1993), 9.

anonymous nature of such media encourages reliance on impressions and feelings rather than analysis that is more thoughtful. This contrasts starkly with an earlier time, when the primary source of information was the written media, which required active mental engagement and encouraged reflection. Modern day myths are no less mythical to their proponents than medieval notions of what lay in the dark forest or at the far reaches of the seas. As the historian Barbara Tuchman has said, “Men will not believe what does not fit in with their plans or suit their prearrangements.”¹⁶

Western Culture

It is ironic that as our Western civilization becomes increasingly a digitized world, the surrounding geopolitical landscape is becoming progressively less “digital” and more “analog.”

For purposes of this analogy, we combine several definitions to say that digital is a description of data that is stored or transmitted as a sequence of *discrete* symbols from a finite set. And, a discrete set is countable or countably infinite. We define analog as relating to, or being a device in which, data are represented by *continuously variable*, measurable, physical quantities. For example, the digital watch indicates the exact time and the analog watch, while indicating the time, requires you to add or subtract in order to state the exact time. And, while the digital watch’s time is exact, the analog watch’s face indicates time in general relation to the upcoming hour or half hour, and so on.

We are a digital culture. We expect our questions to be answered yes or no. We want our problems fixed now. We want our world neatly and discretely categorized into good

¹⁶ Barbara Tuchman, *Practicing History* (New York: Knopf, 1981), 33.

and bad boxes. We do not always want to know how answers on one issue generally relate to another issue.

The U.S. military has not been exempt from this quest for precision answers with quantifiable facts that can be added or subtracted to give an exact, perfectly repeatable answer. This is clear from its increasingly heavy emphasis on operations research, modeling, and simulation. While these disciplines are of undeniable value, it is important that we not conveniently accept the neatly quantified “digital” (more rigorous) analysis over the less tangible, less quantifiable, common sense judgment call when dealing with systems and processes that are highly complex and often non-linear. Especially in a world of small wars, the palette is shades of gray and not the more categorical black or white—one or zero.

By their fundamental nature, small wars require an approach more art than science, more analog than digital.

World War II and the Gulf War in 1991 were both digital wars. We declared war; diplomacy took a back seat, and the military had the clear-cut objective of defeating the enemy armed forces—neat and discrete.

On the other hand, Beirut, Somalia, and Kosovo were analog wars. We were to “create conditions,” “stop the suffering,” and “prevent ethnic cleansing.” Diplomacy continued to operate and military activities were shaped predominantly by political and diplomatic imperatives. The roles and missions of the military constantly varied given the dynamic interplay of political, diplomatic, and economic forces. Unlike World War II and the Gulf War, it was not easy to tell who the bad guy was. Indeed, the good guy one day could easily become the bad guy the next day because of changes, real or

perceived, “on the street.” Thus, the reduced size of the area or smaller number of belligerents does not necessarily simplify the warfighting tasks.

It is our digital culture that makes ours an impatient culture. We want clear results, and we want them now. Fast food and breaking news are our sustenance. Patience is not our cultural virtue, and working in an uncertain environment with fog and deception leads to our critical vulnerability in small wars: resolve. The greatest and most significant danger we have in entering a small war is the potential for an asymmetry of wills. **We must decide before embarking upon any small war whether we can withstand the pressures of our own impatience.**

Chapter 4

Operational Perspectives

As with the strategically oriented fundamental questions, these operational considerations are not prescriptive, but can assist in defining the problem and achieving desired effects. Some argue that small wars should be viewed as simply “lesser included cases” of conventional wars. The implication of this argument is that small wars require little or no special training. Advocates of this position point out correctly that many of the tactics and much of the training developed for conventional warfare are easily adapted to small wars applications. However, at the operational and strategic levels, this logic does not apply, and even at the tactical level, there are increasingly significant areas peculiar to small wars. Perhaps this has always been the case and we are just now coming to grips with it because the goals have changed.

Perhaps we didn't really care what the locals thought in the mid-20th Century. However, today's strategic and operational considerations can be significantly different for small wars than for conventional wars because the goals are different. They require **closer operational cooperation with ongoing diplomatic activities** and more consideration of the overarching political objectives at lower operational and tactical echelons. They are usually about **minimum use of force versus maximum firepower** and destruction; and they require closer and more **extensive coordination between the military and other governmental and non-governmental organizations (NGOs)**. For these three reasons, small wars

cannot be considered as just lesser included cases of large-scale conventional wars, but require special consideration. While it is certainly true that there are many complementary areas, the following operational considerations examine the need to think about small wars differently. Note some of the considerations used during Somalia in the below message.

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P 120730Z JAN 93 ZYB
FM COMMARFOR SOMALIA
TORHIIMEF/BLT ONE SLANT SEVEN
BT
UNCLASS //N01600//
OPER/RESTORE HOPE//
SUBJ/30 DAY ATTITUDE CHECK//
RMKS/1. MANY OF YOU HAVE NOW BEEN IN SOMALIA FOR A
MONTH. SOME OF YOU HAVE BEEN SHOT AT, A FAIR NUMBER OF
YOU HAVE BEEN SICK, THE NEWNESS OF THIS DEPLOYMENT IS
WEARING OFF AND ALMOST ALL OF YOU ARE A LITTLE BIT
TIRED. WE ARE NOW INVOLVED IN WHAT MAY BE THE MOST
DEMANDING PART OF OUR MISSION - RESTORING STABILITY TO
MOGADISHU. BECAUSE WE HAVE BEEN SHOT AT, BECAUSE WE ARE
NOW BUSY COLLECTING WEAPONS WITHIN THE CITY AND BECAUSE
OF ALL THE OTHER THINGS I HAVE MENTIONED, IF WE ARE NOT
CAREFUL WE WILL START THINKING THAT WE'RE AT WAR AND WE
MAY FORGET THAT OUR MISSION HERE IS ONE OF PEACE AND
HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE.
2. WE ALL NEED TO STOP FOR A MINUTE OR TWO AND TAKE AN
ATTITUDE CHECK. HERE ARE A FEW QUESTIONS WE NEED TO ASK
OURSELVES:
- AM I STILL WAVING TO SOMALI CHILDREN? IF THE ANSWER
IS NO, WE AREN'T ACCOMPLISHING OUR MISSION.
- AM I SWEARING AT SOMALIS OR BLOWING THE HORN OF MY
VEHICLE WHEN I GET CAUGHT IN A TRAFFIC JAM OR CROWD?
IF THE ANSWER IS YES, WE AREN'T ACCOMPLISHING OUR
MISSION.
- AM I TREATING THE VOLUNTEER WORKERS FROM CARE, THE
RED CROSS AND OTHER NON-GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS (OR
NGO'S) AND THEIR SOMALI HELPERS (TO INCLUDE THOSE
CARRYING GUNS) WITH RESPECT? IF THE ANSWER IS NO, WE
AREN'T ACCOMPLISHING OUR MISSION.
- WHEN I'M ON PATROL AND A CROWD FORMS, AM I PUSHING
SOMALIS OR POINTING MY WEAPON AT THEM? IF THE ANSWER
IS YES, WE AREN'T ACCOMPLISHING OUR MISSION.
[EXCERPT FROM GENSER MESSAGE FROM MAJGEN WILHELM 12
JAN 93]

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Principles for Small Wars

Joint Pub 3-07, *Joint Doctrine for Military Operations Other Than War*, commonly known as MOOTW, lists these six operational principles: **objective, unity of effort, security, restraint, perseverance, and legitimacy.**

This list is remarkably similar to Sir Robert Thompson's five basic principles of counter-insurgency: have a clear political aim (objective); function in accordance with the law (legitimacy, restraint); have an overall plan to include political, social, economic, administrative, police, and other measures (unity of effort); give priority to defeating the political subversion, not the guerrillas (objective); secure your base area first (security).¹⁷ Perseverance is not one of Thompson's basic principles, but on this matter he states, "By preparing for the long haul, the government may achieve victory quicker than expected. By seeking quick military victories in insurgent controlled areas, it will certainly get a long haul for which neither it nor the people may be prepared."¹⁸ Thompson's long experience in Malaya throughout the Emergency of 1948-1960 makes him an especially qualified commentator on the subject of small wars. The following elaborates on both sets of principles by synthesizing Thompson's principles with joint doctrine.

Objective

Both joint doctrine and Thompson agree with the Clausewitz dictum, "to establish ... the kind of war on which they are embarking." Thompson's first principle emphasizes that the government must have a clear political **objective**, and he

¹⁷ Sir Robert Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency: The Lessons of Malaya and Vietnam* (New York: Praeger, 1966), 50-57.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 58.

stresses repeatedly that this political objective must remain paramount and always in focus. Further, the objective must be clearly understood and credibly attainable by all parties. As Thompson explains, if this long-term objective is not first in the minds of all participants, there will be a tendency to adopt short-term ad hoc measures in reaction to insurgent or terrorist activity. Thompson draws on our Vietnam experience to make his point. Between 1956 and 1964 Vietnam's provinces were increased from 27 to 45. They were created for military and security sector commands, but lacked the administrative backing necessary for them to function effectively as provinces. The inevitable resultant failure in governance discredited the government's efforts across the land and ultimately compromised the security they were designed to enhance. Had the military been more focused on the political objective, its commanders would have realized that reducing the number of provinces would have been the more prudent course of action. Whatever the government they hoped to realize in security they lost through the inability to credibly administer the provinces. In the nature of the conflict is understood the political objective must be developed and adjusted so that it may remain in consonance with the primary objective – the political objective.

Thompson's fourth principle also relates to the objective when he argues that priority of effort should go to defeating political subversion (political cause) and not the guerrilla. This is also consistent in threat matrix warfare in that the focus of effort should be against the matrix threat that perpetrated terrorist attacks rather than on the terrorists themselves. In both cases though, the meaning is the same. The long-term objective must be countering the organizations and conditions that create and support terrorist and insurgent activities and not limited to focusing on the individual terrorists and their tactics. To do this we must correctly identify the insurgent's goals, organization, and support infrastructure and target them

with a comprehensive inter-agency approach orchestrating diplomatic, political, economic, social, and military efforts.

Legitimacy and Restraint

These go hand in glove, both being essential for decisive small wars success. Legitimacy can only be assured by operating within the law, and restraint is necessary to do this. Regardless of the outrages committed by the insurgent or terrorist, our response must always be within lawful bounds. As Thompson says, “A government which does not act in accordance with the law forfeits the right to be called a government and cannot then expect its people to obey the law.”¹⁹ This approach does not preclude tough measures. In Malaya, strict curfews, mandatory death penalty for carrying arms, life imprisonment for providing supplies or support to terrorists, and restricted residence or detention for suspected terrorist supporters were all effectively enacted and enforced. Critically though, they were seen by the population as effective and equally applied to all. “If the government does not adhere to the law, then it loses respect and fails to fulfill its contractual obligation to the people as a government.”²⁰

Unity of Effort

Although important for both conventional and small wars, unity of effort takes on added importance because of the complexity inherent in balancing the military with the political. Interagency coordination and cooperation are essential to achieving effective unity of effort. Thompson calls this having an overall plan. Joint doctrine makes the same point, by recognizing that a coordinated interagency effort is necessary for the coherent application of all elements of

¹⁹ Ibid., 52.

²⁰ Ibid., 54.

national power. Political, economic, diplomatic, military, and informational efforts must be effectively balanced and coordinated. There has been a great deal of analysis of the Malayan Emergency, and there appears to be nearly universal agreement that subordination of the military to the civilian and the resultant unity of effort was the key to British success. Again Thompson, “there should be a proper balance between the military and the civil effort, with complete coordination in all fields. Otherwise a situation will arise in which military operations produce no lasting results because civilian measures ... are unsupported by civil follow-up action.”²¹

Additionally, because establishing the rule of law is a prerequisite for success and a necessary condition before transition to indigenous control, security operations are fundamentally policing and not military functions (regardless of what type of force performs the function). **The biggest practical difference is that policing requires constant presence, high levels of interaction with the populace, and greater density of forces.** In strictly military operations, force ratios are defined as a ratio of friendly to enemy military forces. However, **in policing functions, appropriate force ratios are better determined by the ratio of friendly police/military force to the local populace rather than a ratio of the friendly police/military force to the number of insurgents.** The real goal is building security and legitimacy in the eyes of the populace.

Recognizing the preeminence of the policing function, British authorities ensured **the military was subordinate to the civil authorities through all stages of the Malayan Emergency.** The military’s role was to assist the police and support the programs of the civil government in general. Still, there were

²¹ Ibid., 55.

initial problems in achieving unity of effort. This was rectified by the appointment of Sir Harold Briggs as the Director of Operations. Shortly after assuming his post, Briggs formulated a plan that clearly identified functional and organizational responsibilities. By reducing overlap and dilution of responsibilities he ensured unity of effort. He was able to effectively implement the plan because he had authority over all police and military activities His approach would stand the test of time during twelve years of the Emergency. There is perhaps no better example of how a clear and logical organizational chart can have decisive results in achieving unity of effort. Unity of effort was essential to British success.

Security

Securing one's base of operations provides for the security of one's forces, while facilitating training, planning, and force buildup. However, the psychological benefit is at least as important as the material because it gives tangible evidence of success in the minds of the populace. Everyone wants to be on the winning team, and if we are unable to secure a home base, it is unlikely we will be successful in convincing a wavering population that we can extend the necessary security to them. It is an important example of the benefits that can accrue if the populace lends its support to the government and not the terrorist or insurgent.

This is not an argument for developing a bastion isolated from the indigenous populace. The improved situational awareness and intelligence gathered through close interaction and cooperation with the populace is the surest way to establish security and stability for both our forces and those of the general populace. For example, shortly after they arrived in Danang, South Viet Nam, the Marines set up a program called Combined Action Platoon (CAP).

Each CAP unit consisted of a fifteen-man rifle squad assigned to a particular hamlet in the Marine tactical area of responsibility. CAP units worked with platoons of local Vietnamese militia (Popular Forces, or PFs). CAP Marines were volunteers with combat experience who were given basic instruction on Vietnamese culture and customs. These combined units conducted night patrols and ambushes, gradually making the local Vietnamese forces assume a greater share of responsibility for village security. Their mission was the destruction of the threat's infrastructure, organization of local intelligence networks, and the military training of the PFs.²²

CAPs were immediately successful. In his book, General Walt, commanding general of all Marines in Viet Nam, described the results as being "far beyond our most optimistic hopes."²³ Two years after the initiation of CAP, a US Department of Defense report noted that the Hamlet Evaluation System security score gave CAP-protected villages a score of 2.95 out of a possible 5.0 maximum, compared with an average of 1.6 for all I Corps villages. There was a direct correlation between the time a CAP stayed in a village and the degree of security achieved, with CAP-protected villages

²² Nobody Gets Off the Bus: The Viet Nam Generation Big Book; Volume 5 Number 1-4 March 1994 Civic Action: The Marine Corps Experience in Vietnam, Part II, Peter Brush, Library Science, University of Kentucky

²³ *Strange War, Strange Strategy*, (NY, NY: Funk, 1970): 29 General L. W. Walt, USMC,

progressing twice as fast as those occupied by the Popular Forces militia alone.²⁴

*The casualty rate for CAP units was lower than that of units conducting search-and-destroy missions. British counterinsurgency expert Gen. Richard Clutterbuck noted that although Marine casualties were high, they were only fifty percent of the casualties of the normal infantry battalions being maneuvered by helicopters on large-scale operations.*²⁵

Persistence

This relates to will. Often the nature of small wars forces the lesser military power to rely on protracting the conflict in hopes of capitalizing on an asymmetry of wills. If we demonstrate through word, deed, or policy that we haven't the stomach to stay for the long haul, our adversaries will likely employ a strategy to wear down our will. Thompson discusses the need for persistence under his security principle. Perhaps he did not make it a separate principle because for him it was an implicit requirement, for here was a man who participated in a single counter-insurgency effort for 12 years. The message is clear; we must beware of entering into a conflict that we are not prepared to stay in as long as it takes to win.

Mission Analysis

In any war, large or small, you must conduct a thorough mission analysis of higher headquarters directives to determine specified and implied tasks. This includes identifying centers of gravity and associated critical

²⁴ Andrew F. Krepinevich, Jr., *The Army and Vietnam*, (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986): 172.

²⁵ Ibid 174

vulnerabilities to achieve the desired endstate as stated in the commander's intent. You must also establish measures of effectiveness to indicate progress toward achieving the desired endstate. In the case of small wars, this is not always so easy.

First, there may not be a clearly articulated mission statement. Commanders may be left to determine what is required based upon inferred information. The highly political nature of small wars, derived in part from the fact that diplomacy continues to function, makes determining centers of gravity more complicated since it is necessary to look well beyond strictly military targets. To the extent that it is possible, it requires an effective interagency process to ensure the chosen centers of gravity are appropriate and adjusted as necessary to meet the changing situation.

The end state is what higher authorities—often, the National Command Authorities—want the situation to be when both military operations and operations conducted by the military in support of national interests conclude.²⁶ It also can be “a set of required conditions that, when achieved, attain the aims set for the campaign or operation.”²⁷ In conventional warfare, defeat of the opponent's military force is a clear-cut end state, but in small wars, the requirement may be to establish a certain set of conditions conducive to peace and economic growth. Recalling the analog versus digital analogy, end states in conventional wars tend to be digital, that is, discrete and clear-cut, while in small wars, the end state is more likely to be analog - constantly varying.

Measures of effectiveness (MOE) vary significantly with each situation. In many cases it may be as simple as asking the

²⁶ Joint Pub 1-02 Department of Defence Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms

²⁷ MCRP 5-2A Operational Terms and Graphics

question, “how are we doing today?” In Somalia, MOEs were termed stabilization indicators and included such things as death rate per day due to starvation, gunshot wounds in hospitals, street price of an AK-47, and street price of sack of wheat.²⁸

In general, MOE in small wars are largely subjective and highly changeable over time. MOE should be tied to endstate. Just because something is easily measurable does not make it a useful MOE. Poorly chosen MOE can have dire consequences while properly chosen measures can guide a force toward constructive and effective activities. The body count in Vietnam is an example of a flawed measure of effectiveness. It did not come out of thin air, however. The heavy emphasis on the military component during the war made the body count appear logical when in fact it led to outcomes counter to the desired political objectives. Attempts to increase the body count led to emphasis on large-scale ground and air operations that became militarily ineffective and politically damaging. Heavy bombing and large search and destroy missions caused unacceptable levels of collateral damage and diverted resources away from more effective programs such as the CAP program and Civil Operations and Rural Development Support (CORDS).²⁹

²⁸ Ambassador Robert Oakley, *Briefing to MOUT 2000 Conference*, Santa Monica, CA, 22-23 Mar 2000.

²⁹ Douglass Blaufarb, *The Counter-Insurgency Era: U.S. Doctrine and Performance 1950 to the Present*, (New York: The Free Press, 1977), 119.

Priorities

Here is a useful analogy for establishing small wars priorities:

Stop the bleeding. Start the breathing.
- First Aid Steps

Start the feeding. Stop the bleeding. Fix the feelings.
- Stability and Support Operations Steps

Priority of effort in Stability and Support Operations (SASO) will vary with the specific situation, but one useful way to do this is to modify Maslow’s Hierarchy of needs (i.e., Physiological, Safety, Belonging, Esteem and Self-Actualization).³⁰ This modified hierarchy is: physiological needs; safety and security needs; satisfactory interpersonal relations with family, friends, and society; self-esteem and personal reputation needs; and self-satisfaction needs.³¹

Of note, these needs are from the standpoint of the indigenous population, and in the direst circumstances, their physiological needs must be satisfied before safety needs are fully realized. When transitioning from offensive operations to stability operations, security is usually the first priority for our forces. But it is useful to appreciate that from our standpoint, in the most desperate situations, physiological needs trump all. For example, during Operation Iraqi Freedom, the need for water in Basra took precedence over the need for ensuring security. Reality always intrudes on theory, and it is worth mentioning

³⁰ Abraham H. Maslow, *Toward a Psychology of Being* 3rd Edition, (New York: Wiley Publishers, November 1998)

³¹ Note that this hierarchy is an adaptation of Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs, modified herein for a general audience.

again that the below planning factors are simply tools to assist the leader in assessing the situation and are not formulas or prescriptions.

Physiological Needs The basic requirements of life: food, water, sleep and air.

Safety Needs Once physiological needs are satisfied; the desire for security, stability, and protection begins to manifest itself. Individuals hope for freedom from fear, anxiety, and chaos. Law and order is their new imperative.

Interpersonal Relations Once physiological and safety needs are reasonably well satisfied, the need for fulfilling interpersonal relations with family, friends, and loved ones asserts itself. When unsatisfied, a person will lament the absence of friends and loved ones. Attaining a place of belonging will become more important than anything else. Everyone wants to have a sense of place, and a sense of being needed, appreciated, and belonging regardless of culture, religion, or ethnic background.

Esteem Needs All people with healthy psyches have a need for a stable, positive evaluation of themselves. This is derived from self-esteem and from the esteem in which others hold us. Dignity, prestige, reputation, status, recognition, fame, and glory are all manifestations of the basic need for esteem. Harkening back to the earlier discussion on the need for cultural appreciation, it is impossible for U.S. forces to succeed in facilitating these higher order needs without an appreciation and understanding of the local culture.

Planners should consider grouping identified challenges and deficiencies within each category and develop a prioritized list of tasks. At first the military component is key for ensuring physiological and safety needs. They become more of a

supporting effort when moving on to the higher order needs. Certainly, in some situations the military mission might be only aimed at physiological and safety needs. But, in nearly all cases, this would merely be to deal with symptoms rather than aimed at fixing the causes of the conflict. Sustained solutions will almost always have to address group and personal belongingness and esteem needs. All of these needs in the hierarchy are interdependent. Physiological needs provide the foundation for safety needs and safety needs in turn provide the foundation for interpersonal needs, etc. **Once fulfilled, each category of needs is then subsumed and the predominant motivation comes from the desire to fulfill the next order need.** This progressive and interdependent hierarchy explains why humanitarian operations are never long appreciated. Starving victims fed and returned to health today will soon forget the deeds of their benefactors and in short order will be pursuing fulfillment of the next order needs - their earlier fear and hunger being quickly relegated to distant memories. **As we war planners, we must anticipate this progression and be prepared to respond when the populace is satisfied and prepared to continue the quest for greater self-satisfaction at the next level of hierarchy.** Our conduct of small wars must be responsive to and be prepared to deal with these levels.

This hierarchy of needs is analogous to the life saving steps of “stop the bleeding, start the breathing.” While it is self-evident that sustenance, shelter, and safety must be a top priority, it is equally important that the military to consider belongingness and esteem needs. While exceedingly difficult to do, if these needs can be even partially satisfied, it will greatly facilitate the stabilization of a fractured society and will create a solid foundation to create a sustainable peace.

Complexity in Small Wars

Small war adversaries and the means necessary for effectively countering them are multi-dimensional and thus highly complex. The complexities of the matrix threat were discussed earlier. The complexity of the necessary response, simply put, derives from the fact that the indirect approach, the inherently more complex response, is best suited for success in small wars. In small wars subtlety, nuance, and the modulated application of force are more often effective than the frontal assault—be the effort purely military, or as more likely, a coordinated interagency (joint or combined) effort.

As an institution organized for maneuver warfare, where mission orders and decentralized execution based upon commander's intent are the norm, the Marine Corps is ideally suited as a highly effective force for the prosecution of future small wars.

Operational Functions in Small Wars

The operational functions discussed below are tools to order our thinking and are not to be considered prescriptive. It is important that we define our terms and use them correctly, but it is also important that we not become overly doctrinaire, for functions can and often do overlap.

Full-Dimensional Shaping

In purely military operations, shaping is defined as the use of lethal and/or non-lethal activities to influence events in a manner that changes the general condition of war to our advantage. In the context of small wars, full-dimensional shaping refers to the coordinated application of all elements of national power: political, diplomatic, economic, military, social, legal, and informational to modify or shape conditions so as to facilitate decisive operations. For example, if

psychological operations are to be successful, they must be built upon a solid foundation of public diplomacy.³² Societies just beginning their experience with new information technologies are highly susceptible to manipulation by intentionally or unintentionally distorted perspectives of foreign and state-run media. In the early years of television in this country, many would say that if it was on TV, it had to be true. Few questioned TV's veracity, and it was not until major cheating scandals on popular game shows in the 1950s were exposed that people began to look at TV's content with a more skeptical eye. Today's younger generations are highly skeptical of media content, whereas many of the older still tend to believe that, "they couldn't say that on TV" if it wasn't true."

The population of areas where small wars are most likely to occur may be just entering the information age—similar to ours in the early 1950s. They may just now be developing the judgment necessary to interpret the images they are seeing, thereby widening already divergent views caused by cultural and societal differences. Just as our forces shape the tactical battlespace, we need to use the new information technologies to emphasize public diplomacy and educational efforts to shape the strategic and international impact of small wars.

In addition to closely coordinating their operational information operations within the larger public policy program, the military also has an important part to play in strategic-level public diplomacy. For example, during Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan, Marine Corps maneuver units could not support combat operations from the sea. Inland forward refueling points short of the Afghanistan border had to be used in order to maintain support from

³² Public diplomacy is the task of communicating with overseas publics.

amphibious shipping. This was greatly facilitated because of a well-developed relationship between Pakistan's President Pervez Musharraf and several very senior commanders. Numerous other Pakistani military officers had extensive prior contacts with the U.S. military that greatly enhanced the atmosphere of mutual trust and understanding. These sorts of relations, built through continuous engagement of our military throughout the world, create personal bonds that can be instrumental in successfully managing a short response time crisis. On a tactical level, common understanding and improved interoperability between U.S. and indigenous forces built through earlier joint and combined exercises and mobile training teams can also play a vital shaping role during any crisis. And finally, because many small wars are primarily information wars, it is possible that successful shaping operations can be sufficient to accomplish the desired end state and thus can become "decisive" operations.

Decisive Operations

In small wars, "decisive" may not relate to the traditional military meaning of the term. Decisive could mean achieving a clear decision or final resolution on a specific goal rather than necessarily reaching a broad and definitive conclusion. Once full dimensional shaping sets the stage, the concerted application of all elements of national power must be used to accomplish the desired end state. Frequently, the military will play a prominent role during this stage, but close coordination amongst all agencies is still vital for lasting success.

Because decisive operations may be protracted for small wars, it is especially important to use tempo, not speed, as the appropriate metric. Tempo is speed relative to an adversary. If we are quicker than our adversary, if we are controlling the course of events, we are controlling the tempo and not the speed. However, to be successful in controlling tempo in a

small war, forces have to realize that they can be involved in operations lasting years rather than days. The essential measure of success is the degree of this relationship to the adversary, not the sweep of the clock hand. In small wars, speed can kill.

Sustained Operations

Enabling, maintaining, and expanding upon the successes achieved during decisive operations can be the most challenging and are usually the most time-consuming tasks in any small war. Events in Afghanistan following Operation Enduring Freedom and in Iraq after Operation Iraqi Freedom provide examples of the challenges inherent in sustained operations. While U.S. forces quickly destroyed the Taliban and Iraqi conventional forces, they immediately were confronted with the extremely difficult task of facilitating the installation and maintenance of a viable national government. In small wars, successful sustaining operations often determine if operations are truly strategically decisive.

Sustaining operations that contribute to the desired end state may also be conducted externally to the task force. Diplomacy or peacekeeping operations conducted in adjacent countries and designed to maintain regional stability or reduce external support to hostile forces are examples of external sustaining operations.

Information and Intelligence

Small wars are first and foremost information wars. In conventional warfare, destruction is the norm, whereas in small wars persuasion is more often the objective. **This shift in emphasis from destruction to persuasion creates a radically different context.** Destruction is physical, while **persuasion is psychological, which is why small wars may best be viewed as information wars.** While questions of

intentions and tendencies are important in conventional conflicts, a large part of the warfighter's intelligence and information requirements focus on physical entities such as locations and dispositions of enemy forces. In small wars, while retaining keen interest in force array, information requirements shift to more detailed, subjective evaluations of intentions, aspirations, and tendencies. At the operational and tactical levels, it is necessary to examine the composition and nature of the adversary in much greater detail. While it is true that the profile of opposing commanders has always been of interest, it is likely that in small wars, these sorts of profiles will have to be developed for much lower level participants – civil and military. What does this mean practically for those conducting a small war?

First, you have to recognize that higher headquarters and national sources, while providing valuable intelligence and information, will not provide the necessary fidelity of information needed to successfully conduct tactical operations. Thus, the tactical commander has to gather this information from organic sources. It can be argued that such a realization could have helped prevent the surprise attack in Lebanon. The huge and expensive apparatus of the Defense Department's intelligence network was unable to supply the information necessary to effectively warn the Marines of a potential suicide attack. Sole reliance upon "higher headquarters" or "reachback" in small wars is to doom the mission to failure.

Commanders must ensure their entire organization becomes an indications and warnings system, and that their information is fed back to higher, adjacent and subordinate commanders. One possible way of doing this is to avoid cantonment arrangements that isolate our forces from any interaction from local surroundings. Greater connection with the environment and the local population creates opportunities for close

interaction and provides the level of understanding necessary to develop accurate situational awareness. All this should be done while living up to the mantra of the 1st Marine Division during OIF: "No better friend, no worse enemy."

Either through billeting within the population, aggressive patrolling, or a combination of both Marines must begin developing background information from the moment they disembark in order to achieve the necessary levels of situational awareness. Much of this tactical information and intelligence gathering will be based upon natural human interaction with the populace. Technology, rather than replacing this human interaction, is providing new capabilities that when properly applied will greatly facilitate information collection. For example, wireless local area networks (LANs), smart cards, and shared databases can become powerful tools in developing a clear intelligence picture.

Patrols equipped with handheld or wearable computers with wireless connectivity can provide the raw data necessary to build a substantial database of information to describe and map the local populace. Patrols can question individuals about their residence, occupation, relations, and affiliations. Once these data are entered into the patrol's computer, it can then be wirelessly transmitted to a master database. From the aggregation of such open source information, and through reachback analysis, significant amounts of intelligence can be produced. At the time of the interview, an identity card with an embedded microchip (smart card) could be produced which records the information provided. Once the populace has been provided with and required to carry such smart cards, it could be possible to run periodic checks to monitor activities and thus point out anomalies. Graphical interfaces and graphical search engines could provide commanders with powerful tools to greatly facilitate the interpretation of trends or identification of significant indicators.

In the end, though, it is not the technology that matters most. While technology can greatly facilitate the recording and interpretation of information, it is the actual process of human interaction that is the essential part. Even with the most explicit information possible, the commander must still have a solid grasp of the culture and history of the area in order to appreciate the significance of such information.

Unity of Command/Unity of Effort

There is enough complexity in small wars without accepting convoluted chains of command. This is one variable we must make every effort to control. It is critically important to know who's in charge and who's calling the shots. This is not to say that a clear and unambiguous chain of command can be established in every instance, but it must always be a primary objective when building the force. **The shades-of-gray approach necessary to successfully conduct a small war requires the type of unity of effort that can only be achieved by unity of command within the military component - both regular and special operations forces.** The military component must then operate in very close cooperation and coordination with other involved agencies and allies regardless of whether a comprehensive chain of command can be established encompassing all participants.

Various entities, both governmental and non-governmental and from different countries, will likely be involved. Every effort must be made to develop a rational and agreed upon chain of command in this environment. This should not be construed as a desire for centralized execution. On the contrary, like fire support coordination, we need the coherence provided by centralized command paired with decentralized execution, empowering subordinates to the utmost while guiding their actions through commander's intent.

All interagency participants must endeavor to attain unity of effort. The complex nature of small wars demands a holistic approach to avoid self-defeating actions and contradictory messages. The highly political nature of small wars demands an approach analogous to governance of a municipality. Economic development, utilities, maintenance, and security must all be balanced and effectively addressed. Failures in any one of these areas can lead to systemic failure. Town and municipality management disciplines and curricula could provide useful insights and techniques for effectively coping with some of these coordination challenges.

Here again, the British experience in Malaya provides an instructive example. In 1950, Sir Henry Briggs recognized the need for unified command, and established a War Council at the strategic level that included civil, police, and military representatives and acted as a coordinating committee.³³ Coordinating committees were also established at state and district levels. These committees provided for unity of effort by reducing duplicative operations and facilitating more rapid exchange of intelligence, thereby significantly improving operational results.³⁴

In the Malaya example, Briggs was a civilian (retired general). However, it is possible for either a civilian or a military officer to head an interagency headquarters. A civilian head is preferable in many cases because this structure is the most likely to gain the necessary cooperation from other civilian and non-governmental entities. Also, all leaders must pursue diplomatic efforts to seek a return to normal relations as

³³ Robert Asprey, *War in the Shadows* (New York: William Morrow and Co., 1994), 568.

³⁴ Richard Clutterbuck, *The Long Long War – Counter-Insurgency in Malaya and Vietnam* (New York: Praeger, 1966), 57-9.

quickly as possible. Above all, the leaders must participate meaningfully in war termination negotiations to reduce the likelihood of institutionalizing mistakes that led to the conflict in the first place.

Trust is the linchpin to achieving unity of effort. Without trust, effective cooperation and coordination will not take place.

Thus, **gaining and maintaining trust among all participants is of absolutely essential.**

Dynamics of the Interagency Process

Nationally, the Defense and State Departments are where the effort towards unity of command begins. This can be less than seamless at times. For example, Regional Assistant Secretaries of Defense (the Combatant Commander's functional equivalent) have not typically been employed in actual operations, and the State Department Political Advisor (POLAD) assigned to the Combatant Commander serves only in an advisory role. Clearly, productive relations have to be established between these principals in order to favorably shape successful broader institutional or organizational efforts.

Ambassadors and embassy staffs who are on the ground are assigned to specific countries and do not have authority over the wider region. Country teams are thus not equipped to coordinate regional activities, as is the theater commander. In the future, emergencies will often transcend national boundaries, and the absence of compatible organizational structures between State and Defense will become increasingly problematic. This mismatch often means that by default, the Combatant Commander is in charge of complex regional contingencies, even when a civilian would more appropriately head the mission.

At the tactical level, a cooperative relationship has developed between the military and NGOs. Many NGOs have come to rely on the military for logistical support and security. For its part, the military has grown to accept the presence of the NGO community as an integral element of the small wars landscape. However, important distinctions will always remain despite this increasingly cooperative relationship. **One such distinction arises from the NGO inclination to maintain neutrality—not assisting or impeding either side in a conflict. The military, on the other hand, while generally exercising impartiality, enforces discipline against either side that crosses a certain line or violates established rules.** While NGOs need the military's protection to perform their missions, associating too closely with the military can, in their view, compromise their neutrality. The result is that the two communities have different incentives for information sharing. NGOs are particularly sensitive if they feel that military forces are trying to gain information from them for military advantage. The two communities also have different time horizons. The NGOs' presence is indefinite, whereas the military's is usually of much more limited duration.

Chapter 5

Tactical Perspectives

The body of writing on tactics, techniques, procedures (TTPs), and lessons learned applicable to small wars is voluminous and ever changing as we learn more and better ways to respond. Unlike 1940 when the *Small Wars Manual* was the only reference, there is now an extensive library of useful Joint and Service doctrine, TTPs, and lessons learned.

To meet today's challenge of getting the right information to right user at the right time, the Marine Corps has established a website <http://www.smallwars.quantico.usmc.mil> focused on small wars. Even though most of its content can be printed, the website is designed to have a robust search capability to allow the busy operator to plug in a search query and get only the needed information quickly. This resource can provide baseline unit standard operating procedures (SOPs) that can then be tailored to meet the immediate situation.

Ideally, unit leaders will have time during their preparatory phase to review the website and build their own reference resource prioritized upon mission, enemy, terrain, weather, troops, support, and time available (METT-T) analysis before deployment. However, the real world inevitably contains surprises, and the small wars website offers a valuable tool to react to unexpected contingencies by providing access to a wide array of the latest small wars relevant reference material.

Counterinsurgency

Much of the current counterinsurgency material is still heavily flavored by the Cold War and Vietnam experiences. While much of the material remains valid, as with the strategic and operational perspectives these resources are guides that can and should be adapted to the 21st century. And, while TTPs are more prescriptive than strategic or operational planning factors, this does not mean they cannot or should not be modified to meet the specifics of the situation at hand. The complexity and variability of the small wars problem demands flexibility and adaptability at all levels—strategic, operational, and tactical. Lessons learned from the Global War on Terrorism and operations in Afghanistan and Iraq will provide new tactical perspectives. This knowledge, and that gleaned from future conflicts, will be added to the small wars website.

Knowledge and appreciation of local cultures is especially important in counterinsurgency operations. Here again, the unclassified cultural intelligence studies produced by the Marine Corps Intelligence Activity are a good starting point. These studies are available in CD-ROM and on the SIPRNET, and should be exploited to the fullest.

Stability and Support Operations

FM 3-07 *Stability Operations and Support Operations* is especially relevant to small wars. In addition to providing useful definitions and clarifying some unique terminology it provides the analytical tools needed to evaluate a stability operation or a support operation. It describes both US policies relating to contemporary actions and the Army's role in them. This Field Manual discusses planning considerations and draws distinctions—that are important in the conduct of small wars—between stability operations and support operations.

Urban Operations

Marine Corps Warfighting Publication (MCWP) 3-35.3 *Military Operations on Urbanized Terrain* is rich in useful TTPs for full-scale urban combat. However, until its next revision, it lacks extensive TTP information that is useful in small wars.

Project Metropolis

To fill the gap in tactical information applicable to small wars conducted on urbanized terrain, the Marine Corps Warfighting Laboratory created Project Metropolis (ProMet). It partners with Marine Corps Operating Forces to find ways to improve the Marine Corps ability to fight and operate in the most likely battlefield of the future—urbanized terrain. Focused on conducting experiments at the small unit level, ProMet has discovered and developed effective TTPs and some enabling technologies useful in small wars. The knowledge gained from these experiments is currently published in “X-Files” (see below) and will form the core of additions and revisions to applicable doctrine. And, as a consequence of training Marines and Sailors to participate in experiments, the Lab created a course of instruction: “Basic Urban Skills Training” (BUST). This experimental training program, about to be formalized across the Marine Corps, is part of the SASO training provided to Marines deployed for these operations in Iraq. This training is especially relevant to small wars.

X-Files

The Marine Corps Warfighting Lab’s **X-files** are a valuable source for TTPs that are relevant to small wars. They are available directly from the Marine Corps Warfighting Laboratory website http://www.mcwl.usmc.mil/x_files.asp.

- The X-Files gather, organize and synthesize knowledge from post training analysis and feedback from Marines,

Sailors and other participants in the Warfighting Lab’s experiments. They do not contain official doctrine, nor are they policy or standard operating procedures (SOPs).

- The X-Files contain useful information packaged for rapid reading and easy transport in the cargo pocket of the utility uniform.
- They convey a synthesis of knowledge gained from experiments with TTPs and some enabling technologies that can help us fight and win battles. Most of them focus on operations in the urban battlespace.
- They are an evolving body of knowledge that is being constantly refined through experimentation.
- Much of the information in the X-Files is entered into the Marine Corps Combat Development System. It forms the backbone of recommended revisions to Marine Corps doctrine for Military Operations on Urbanized Terrain (MOUT).
- Knowledge in the X-Files also underpins much of the Basic Urban Skills Training (BUST) program used by the Operating Forces.

Chapter 6

Preparing For The Challenges Ahead

Structure

Important technological and educational advances over the past century have caused military organizational structures to realign in order to optimize their employment. The resulting gains in efficiency, lethality, and the like are well known. However, in conducting small wars, such factors as experience, character, common sense, flexibility, creativity, and cultural awareness can cause some different organizational adaptations. For example, some rigid forms of bureaucracy can be a significant structural impediment to effective preparation and conduct of small wars where maximum flexibility and creativity are essential. From a creative perspective—which is often the ingredient needed for success in small wars—the rigid checks and balances in a mature bureaucracy may tend to limit bold, unconventional planning and execution. Some of the lessons of history caution leaders to beware of structural obstructions that limit the creative thinking that can make the difference between success and failure in small wars.

Additionally, warfighters should periodically review and evaluate their organizational structure for unnecessary levels of scrutiny that diminish freedom to try innovative solutions. New and “improved” rules and regulations are frequently promulgated, but seldom are old ones removed or rescinded. The cumulative effect of this piling on of regulations is the bane of developed bureaucracies.

A look at the use of the warfighting function of Force Protection is a good example of how bureaucratic checks and balances can have unintended consequences. A logical and important concept, and certainly not a new one, some leaders have taken force protection to an illogical extreme. Specifically, some potentially high payoff calculated risks are not undertaken by units because of the cumulative effect of layers in the chain of command demanding heavy oversight and accountability in order to insulate their respective organizations from blame. When present, this type of reflexive response can make force protection the overriding consideration and limit effective maneuver warfare. Unfortunately, to the extent that it occurs, overemphasis on force protection in a patrol base tends to preclude the close interaction desired to gain legitimacy from the local populace and develop a true understanding of how best to conduct the small war.

Experience

At the beginning of the last century, the Marine Corps had fewer than 300 officers and less than 8,000 enlisted. Given the constant commitments throughout the early 20th century and the very small size of the Corps, a high percentage of officers had small wars experience.³⁵ As Chesty Puller said, “The Constabulary Detachment, where I saw it in both Haiti and Nicaragua, was the best school the Marine Corps has ever devised.” In contrast, recent Marine Corps participation in small wars has been short-term, small-scale, and episodic, with experience spread across a Corps over 20 times larger than a century ago.

³⁵ Keith Bickel, *Mars Learning* (New York: Westview Press, 2001), 16. Roughly one-third of officers in any one-year between 1915-1935 were engaged in small wars.

The foregoing does not mean that the World War II was fought like a small war. Rather, it was the cultural, institutional warfighting ethos, and self-sufficient can-do approach developed from involvement in small wars that held the Corps in such good stead when it came to preparing for and conducting island hopping campaigns of the Pacific.

Even as our Operating Forces gain significant experience in Iraq, we still must understand that our warfighting ethos and culture of adaptability are maintained and improved by vigorous education, training and doctrine development. This is not to say that the Marine Corps should become heavily reliant on formal doctrine at the expense of learning from our practical experience and healthy oral tradition. While larger organizations, with much larger bureaucracies, have increasingly come to rely upon doctrine to cope with the challenges inherent in their massive structures, the Corps will continue to rely more upon a climate of open mindedness, mentoring, and on-the-job training rather than upon strict doctrinal conformity. Only through this approach can we avoid learning the wrong lessons. For example, we can reduce the tendency to think that just because something “worked” one time in a given set of circumstances it will work every time in all generally similar circumstances. This mixing of hard earned experience with a culture of “not having all the answers” will go a long way toward ensuring that training, education, and doctrine development will remain vital and provide us the tools to be successful in small wars.

Marines of the early years of the last century who excelled at small wars and subsequently in the cauldrons of World War I and World War II were long-serving professionals with extensive field experience. They provided the competent and capable cadres that enabled the successful wartime expansion of the Corps. However, in today’s Marine Corps of external assignments and the like, it is often difficult to build the level

of operational experience necessary to cope with the complexities of small wars. We have to work hard to overcome this reality.

Today, diversions from warfighting have grown. And, for those fortunate enough to be involved in combat or contingency operations, the duration of this experience is usually measured in weeks rather than the months and years of the earlier era. Concurrently, as our level of experience as a percentage of the force declines, our oral history, which was largely perpetuated through social interaction in the clubs and the larger military community, is diminishing. Like the larger society from which it comes, today’s officer corps is more fragmented and insular, and lacks opportunities for experiencing the oral tradition which served to educate earlier generations of Marines in the subtleties of warfare. In such an environment, education and training take on added importance.

In short, solid historical education, extensive cultural study, and rigorous training are essential correctives to the challenges presented by an increasingly bureaucratized and less culturally and socially cohesive military.

Education

In addition to its importance described earlier, education is a critical component for successfully understanding and coping with the wide variety of actors in small wars. In the small wars of the early 20th century, the military was frequently the only show in town and, thus, there was little competition for legitimacy within the theater of operations. Today, there are an ever-growing number of actors competing for attention and resources. NGOs, private volunteer organizations (PVOs), international organizations, private military corporations (PMCs) and the media are all involved, making military

operations more complex and unwieldy. Without a solid educational foundation, Marines will be ill equipped to deal with the numerous institutional and human cultures with which they will be confronted.

Cultural Studies

During the Cold War, it was possible to provide professional military education (PME) on “the threat” (e.g., Soviet Union) through formal schools and informal training programs. In the current multipolar world of numerous but non-specific threats, this is no longer so easy. The traditional approach to teaching “the threat” is now impractical since the list of possible adversaries is too numerous to focus on any one individual threat in great detail. That said, through careful review and analysis it should be possible to choose, for example, the top five threats to study and wargame against.

Ultimately, however, only through the study of history and cultural studies can we build the broad foundation necessary from which to interpret and then counter specific emergent threats. Now more than ever, information is power. The type of information necessary for success in small wars is not the type of ephemeral information provided by sensors in a network centric grid. Rather, it is the information and understanding that can only be gleaned from human networks, and successfully interpreted by a military imbued with a deep understanding of the historical and cultural context from which a specific threat emanates.

Contextual Knowledge

There has been a high level of attention and investment in improving immediate reporting capabilities through technical means such as the Common Relevant Operational Picture (COP). Significantly less attention has been paid to building the foundational information needed to provide commanders

with the contextual knowledge necessary for rapid decision-making – the second “O” in the OODA Loop. For example, studies have shown that emergency response personnel such as fire chiefs use recognitional decision-making. This means they have extensive personal experience in their area of expertise and when confronted with an emergency, are able to rapidly assimilate the data and make rapid decisions based upon the contextual knowledge derived from their experience base. Developing a workable COP is very important, but only through aggressive education and training will we have leaders with the skills necessary to most efficiently and effectively use this new information tool.

History

Marines must be able to make critical decisions quickly in the face of great uncertainty. Given the many forms that warfare can take today, it is impossible for first-hand experience to provide the level of expertise necessary to make the best decisions. Given this, the study of military history must act as a surrogate for actual experience. For example, General MacArthur’s decision to conduct an amphibious landing at Inchon during the Korean War was greatly influenced by knowledge of the amphibious operations of World War II. This allowed him to use amphibious maneuver to land in the rear of the North Korean troops and cause them to have to fight in two directions. It is with similar thoughts in mind that the 29th Commandant of the Marine Corps instituted a Commandant’s Reading List and charged all Marines with pursuing the study of military art and science through the study of military history. This program was yet another manifestation of the cultural shifts emanating from the shocks of Beirut. Another example of the importance of the study of military history comes from the Commanding General of the 1st Marine Division during Operation Iraqi Freedom:

The problem with being too busy to read is that you learn by experience (or by your men's experience) —that is—the hard way.... Ultimately, a real understanding of history means that we face nothing new under the sun. For all those that say that the nature of war has fundamentally changed, that the tactics are wholly new, I must respectfully say, "Not really!" ... We have been fighting on this planet for 5,000 years, and we should take advantage of the experience of those who have gone before us.³⁶

Training

The best preparation for small wars, aside from practical experience, is study and practice—training and education. Training provides for the practical application of lessons learned through historical and area education and other technical instruction. As with any performing artist, there is no substitute for performance before a live audience.³⁷ For the military, this translates into externally evaluated command post and field training exercises and field experimentation. To assist in training, new advances in modeling and simulation (M&S) provide staffs the ability to evaluate courses of action by simulating complex scenarios. While modeling and simulation will never provide a foolproof predictive tool, the training benefits of M&S cannot be ignored.

To be most effective, training for small wars must be force-on-force with active participation by actual or simulated

³⁶ Mattis, MGen James N. "The Professional Edge." *Marine Corps Gazette*: Volume 88 Number 2, (February 2004): 19-20

³⁷ Jon Sumida, *Inventing Grand Strategy and Teaching Command: The Classic Works of Alfred Thayer Mahan Reconsidered* (Washington DC: The Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1997), xiii.

civilian officials, non-combatants, and aggressors. As one example, garrison settings can be used as small wars training areas at little or no cost. While in garrison, Marines could participate in ongoing training activities where role players "visit" the command post (CP) as part of a scenario that simulates conditions the unit would confront if it were deployed for a small wars mission. Various units throughout the base could be assigned roles thereby simulating a potential threat country or region within our existing bases. Given the large political, civil, and economic aspects of small wars, much practical training could be done in this way without leaving home. Scenario-based garrison training conducted by a dedicated opposition force (OPFOR) would greatly assist in unit preparation for small wars.

A prevalent part of small wars discussion during the 1990s centered on whether preparation for small wars (or MOOTW) should be as a lesser included case of conventional warfare. Upon examination, the real focus of this discussion was on training priorities. Did the military require specialized training in order to properly conduct MOOTW? While some tasks are obviously more important in MOOTW—or small wars—than in large-scale conventional warfare, most of the TTPs are largely the same. Consider, for example, crowd control or building searches. This argument weakens significantly when it is taken beyond TTPs. As discussed earlier, operational and strategic level considerations for small wars are distinctly different from conventional operations, thus invalidating the "lesser included case" argument. The key point here is that although forces trained and equipped for conventional operations can successfully perform small wars missions, they are not optimized for them as long as they are not schooled in the requisite small wars skills.

Modular Task Organization

Flexible task organization of combined arms teams is essential for small wars. Teamwork, implicit understanding and the use of modular task organization will be critical for success in the small war battlespace. The standing Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF) that deploys aboard amphibious ships is organized in garrison as they are envisioned to fight. But, because a mission can require certain specialized capabilities not organic to a MAGTF, a modular task organization (plug and play, mission focused standing unit—such as the Chemical Biological Incident Response Force (CBIRF)) could be used to effectively tailor a standing MAGTF with relative ease. This is also true of such mission-focused specialties as the Civil Affairs Groups (CAG) and Human Intelligence Exploitation Team (HET).

Modular task organization provides the ability to tailor standing organizations with well-trained, cohesive, mission-oriented force packages (modules), thereby providing specialized capabilities lacking or present in insufficient quantity in the larger standing MAGTF. In an increasingly complex world, specialization is essential to meet new and sophisticated threats (e.g., information warfare), but it is imperative that these specializations not come at the expense of the inherent flexibility and overall general-purpose capabilities required of the larger force to cope with the broad range of possible threats.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

The conclusion of this work is really the end of the beginning of a continuing study of small wars. This slim volume is not intended to be the definitive word on the subject. It should be a springboard to additional examination and reflection on the complex phenomenon of small wars. The art of successfully conducting small wars cannot be learned from a manual. It requires continuous reading, thinking, and doing.

The premier source of unclassified interactive information concerning past and present Small Wars, management tools for the understanding of the history, nature and relevance of Small Wars in the 21st Century security environment and the conduct of Small Wars Programs and events is located at the Marine Corps Small Wars Center of Excellence website <http://www.smallwars.quantico.usmc.mil/>. The site contains observations and insights from key Small Wars operations, lessons learned, TTPs and information on Small Wars programs, lectures, exhibits and readings. We must study history, the cultures of the world, and our military profession, for with our long legacy of small wars we have no excuse, when fighting them, for not fighting them well.³⁸

³⁸ Garnett, 768-9.